

REVIEW

NORTHUMBERLAND FAMILIES. By W. Percy Hedley. The Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne. Volume One, 1968. Pp. xi + 289.

The appearance of the first volume of Mr. W. Percy Hedley's *Northumberland Families* is a notable event in the study of genealogy and of English north-country history. First, a word of praise for the production of the volume. It is large (12" × 9½"), handsomely bound and excellently printed in a clear, legible type with generous margins. The essential skeleton of the work is composed of some eighty-nine chart-pedigrees, for which a superbly effective typographical format has been worked out. It is important to realise that these splendid pedigrees constitute the basic anatomy on to which the text has been laid as flesh on to bone; the tables are not mere illustrations, but the very core and essence. The volume is completed and made accessible by an admirable index running to sixteen pages in triple column.

These apparent *minutiae* have been stressed at the outset in order to make it clear that Mr. Hedley's book is no coffee-table piece, to be thumbed through idly in the hope of finding a chance ancestor or two. It is a work of the most solid and exact historical scholarship, and it will provide countless grateful students with an invaluable tool of research and investigation. By the time the whole *magnum opus* is published the counties of Northumberland and Durham (for this is how, with historical accuracy, Mr. Hedley under-

stands "Northumberland") will be able to boast a *catalogue raisonné* of their families, great and small and middling, which will be second to none for any region of the British Isles. It is to be hoped devoutly that no obstacles of finance or energy delay the appearance of the remaining volumes.

Volume I is devoted to the genealogical *origines* of Northumbria: the royal house of Bernicia; the Eadulfings and their successors, earls of northern Northumbria; the "particularly endogamous group" (as the author calls them) of Norman barons to whom much of the earldom was granted out by the Crown in the reigns of the Conqueror's two sons; and the surprisingly well-documented native families whose fortunes, mostly modest but firm, survived the Conquest—the hereditary priests of Hexham, for example, who produced in the person of Saint Ailred the most famous Englishman of the twelfth century, or the thegns and drengs, at Halton, Whittingham, Mousen and Beadnell, whose estates and tenure form such a distinctive feature of Northumbrian social history down to the thirteenth century and beyond. But one generation leads to another, and many of Mr. Hedley's tables finish with a line of descendants still happily alive and flourishing. Social continuity is very marked in Northumberland. Of two families, Surtees and Swinburne, to whom more space is devoted than to any others, the former, perhaps rather more wealthy and influential in its heyday, was descended in the male line from a Northumbrian freeholder of Old English or Anglo-Scandinavian stock, Elsi of Tees, who married Egfrida, daughter of the Yorkshireman Orm, Gamal's son. The latter, though taking its surname from West Swinburne in Chollerton parish and deeply embedded in the Tyne valley, was descended in the male line from a presumably "Norman" Pain son of Asketill "of Worcester"; a younger son of one of those lesser Norman families, comparable with the Lindsays and the Scottish Barclays (de Berkeley) who took a surname from an English region, city or village. The ramifications of Surtees and Swinburne fill many fascinating pages; and it is families of

this type, rather than the storied names of Balliol, Umphra-ville and Vesci, which make up the bulk of this volume. Northumbrians by residence, descent or adoption will find an obvious interest in Mr. Hedley's book; but many others, social historians, sociologists, demographers as well as more old-fashioned family and political historians, will value this great quarry of evidence. Itself the devoted labour of one man's lifetime, it will be used and enjoyed for many lifetimes to come.

G. W. S. BARROW.